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THE PROBLEM OF NATIONALITY.

READ BEFORE THE

LIVERPOOL PHILOMATHIC SOCIETY,

MAY 1st, 1889.

BY

REV. J. POLACK, B.A.,

VICE-PRESIDENT.

LIVERPOOL:

PRINTED BY D. MARPLES & CO. LIMITED, LORD STREET.

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Michael Freilander,

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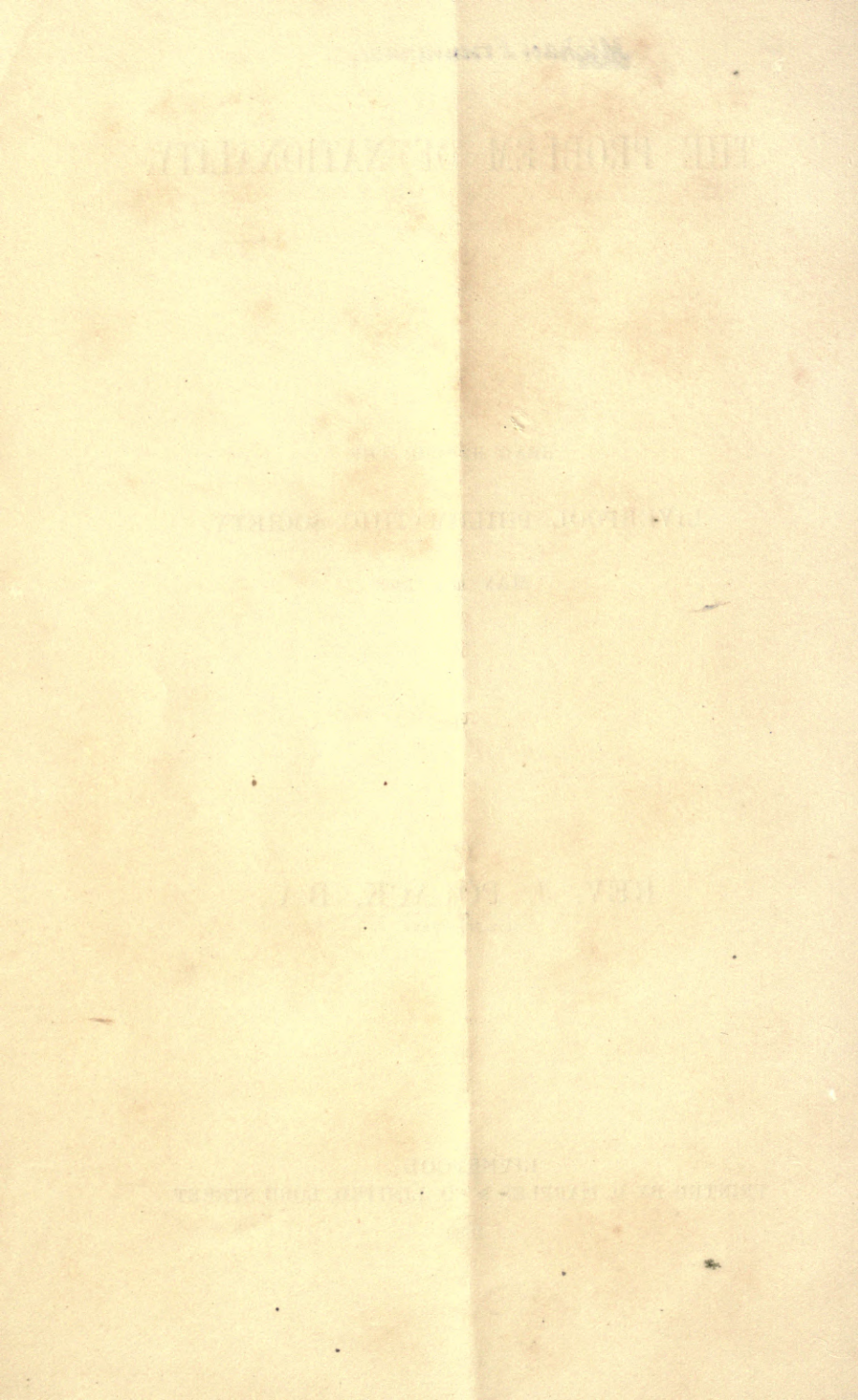
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THE PROBLEM OF NATIONALITY.

It is often said that when a man is called upon to enter into converse with his fellow-men in a capacity which is not peculiarly his own, he ought to take care to avoid those topics which happen to be particularly associated with the business or profession he pursues. To "talk shop," when the shop is locked up for the day, is considered to display the very worst of taste. On the other hand, as has been pointed out by a distinguished writer, the subjects on which a man must be held most qualified to speak with weight and intelligence are those which are intimately connected with, or are suggested by, the occupation to which the main portion of his life is devoted; and as the object of the intellectual intercourse of men is the exchange of ideas and the development of thought, not merely with the view of realising the pleasure of mental exercise, but also, and mainly, for the purpose of eliciting truth, it follows that when the responsibility devolves upon one of attempting to engage the attention of his fellows by the discussion of some theme that may be of interest to them, he is far more likely to succeed in his object if he select a subject from his own sphere of knowledge or study, than if he approach some new topic which requires to be specially read up for the occasion.

It is because I deem this principle to be valid that I venture to submit to the consideration of the Philomathic Society some thoughts on a subject which comes within the scope of the speculations with which I am, as a rule, more immediately occupied. I have the less hesitation, however,

in treating of such a theme before a Society so wide and general in its character as that which I am addressing, since it happens that the subject—though I have not approached it from this point of view—stands in some sort of relation with more than one of the great political questions of the day, and, in the opinion of some politicians at least, may have an important bearing upon the solution of those problems.

One of the results of the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-71 was an immense accession of strength to the national spirit in Germany. The creation of a powerful German Empire—an empire in fact, and not merely in name—was at once the outcome of this revived national feeling and the cause of a heightened patriotism and national enthusiasm throughout the federal states which agreed to be thus consolidated. For a time this new nationalism became the supreme impelling influence in every political and social movement throughout the country. Intoxicated with their success at arms, and elated at the supremacy to which almost at one bound they had leaped, the Germans began to regard the national feeling in the light of a religion, and to bow down before it as an object of worship. It was inevitable that such an exaggerated devotion to one idea should betray enthusiasts into a certain contraction of vision and narrowness of feeling. Only the most large-minded and generous men can stand the strain of an extension of the heart-strings in various directions at the same time. With the ordinary run of people, a prolonged stretch of sentiment in one direction implies a shrinking in some other. Hence the extreme homage paid to the national feeling in Germany was productive of some amount of prejudice and bigotry. The cry of "Germany for the Germans," which soon resounded throughout the length and breadth of the land, bore some-

what unlovely fruit in the banishment of numerous aliens who had settled in the towns, but who unluckily had not become naturalized German citizens. A curious attempt was made to purge the language of foreign terms, especially those used in the political and official business of the country, and to substitute for them words which sounded with a pure Teutonic ring. But the most remarkable manifestation of this newly engendered narrowness was a bold attempt to deny to a certain section of the population the right of participation in the commonwealth of the nation, because they differed from the great mass of their neighbours in race and in creed. It was on these two grounds that the Jews of Germany became, to a considerable number of patriotic Germans, an obnoxious element in the country. These heated partizans formed themselves into an association for the expression and promotion of their views. Anxious to repudiate the notion that they were prompted by animus against any particular class of individuals, they left out from their title all direct reference to the real objects of their attack, and called themselves the Anti-Semitic League ; nevertheless, their avowed object was the exclusion of the Jews from all civil and political rights, while not a few of their body boldly demanded the expulsion of all members of the Jewish race from German soil. From hundreds of platforms in various parts of Germany the doctrine was published that the existing remnant of the Jewish race, dispersed though it was throughout every quarter of the globe, yet formed a separate nation, distinct from the various nationalities with which it mingled or came into contact. The Jews residing in Germany, it was declared, were not and could not be a part of the German nation. It mattered little or nothing to these propagandists of the new-fangled nationalism, that the class of inhabitants whom they thus endeavoured to proscribe were born and bred on the soil of

the Fatherland, that their progenitors had lived there for many generations, that they served in the German army and fought for the German cause, that they had been admitted into the Parliament of the nation, that they took an active part in all social and intellectual movements, that they studied in the Universities, edited German newspapers, wrote German books, advocated loyalty to the Emperor of Germany. These considerations were of absolutely no import in face of the fact that Jews were of a different race and creed from those to which the bulk of the German nation belonged, and therefore *à priori* were incapable of sympathising with the national aspirations and rallying round the national institutions.

Now it will be observed that in this position there is involved a fundamental question, about the calm and philosophic discussion of which the Anti-Semitic League did not much trouble itself, but the logical answer to which really determines the genuineness or spuriousness of their arguments, and disposes, in fact, of the mists of doubt and vague speculation which gather around the whole attitude of nationalism. In short, we need an answer to the question : What constitutes a nation ? What are the conditions of nationality ? What are the marks of likeness common to all the individuals composing a nation, yet, at the same time, distinguishing those individuals from those of their fellow-creatures that belong to other nations ? It is with this fundamental problem that I propose to deal : a problem apparently very simple of solution, but upon closer examination clearly bristling with difficulties ; and while I am fully conscious of my inability to treat the subject exhaustively, yet I may perhaps take credit for leading the Society into paths not too often trodden, but which are not by any means cut off from the highway of current political thought.

It may, indeed, seem strange at first sight that the

problem of nationality—the question of what a nation really is—has not received that meed of attention from the political philosophers of this country which its importance merits. No doubt we occasionally hear a partial and casual discussion of the subject in connection with the advocacy of individual claims and the promotion of special political pretensions; such as when the peculiar wants and characteristics of the Welsh are insisted upon at an Eisteddfod, or when the toast of “Ireland, a nation,” is drunk on St. Patrick’s Day in Dublin. But so far as I have been able to discover there has been no attempt to present to English readers a careful analysis of the idea of nationality apart from any preconceived views; there exists, so far as I am aware, no treatise in English having for its special object to expound the conception which the word nation suggests—to discriminate between the essential conditions upon which the existence of a nation as such is based, and those more or less accidental circumstances which may happen to enter into and govern its life and character. In France and Germany the very reverse is the case. French literature can boast of a most instructive essay on the subject, written by so distinguished an author as M. Rénan,* and marked by the luminous style and the clearness of thought for which that celebrated *litterateur* is famous; while in various magazines of Germany weighty papers are to be met with, which constitute valuable contributions towards the elucidation of the problem. It is not difficult, however, to account for this defect of our literature as compared with that of continental nations. The political conditions which have subsisted both in France and Germany within the present century—indeed, I might add throughout their whole history—have been such as to produce constant confusion in the minds of the people of those realms as to what the determining factors of the integrity of a nation

* *Qu’est-ce qu’une Nation.* Paris, 1882.

are. In France, the form of government has undergone, within living memory, a rapid succession of fundamental changes; while, at the same time, conquest by a foreign power has necessitated the marking out of a new line of frontier. As regards Germany, the issue of various international conflicts in recent times has produced still greater alterations in the boundaries of the Imperial dominions; while the peculiar constitution of the Empire, whereby many states which previously were almost, if not absolutely, independent, have been federated and reduced to a position of more or less dependence on one central state, has had the effect of still more perplexing the popular mind, and of causing a re-examination of accepted views on the subject of the limits of nationality. In England there have been no such disturbing elements at work. For more than two centuries we have had a stable and universally acknowledged form of government, while the well-defined boundaries of our country, partly determined by our insular position, have afforded a sort of rough and ready solution of the question, which seemed to satisfy for the time being, and rather to repress than invite a logical inquiry into the subject. Yet it will scarcely be gain-said that Englishmen, of all people, ought to have settled convictions on such a matter as the nature and constitution of a nation. Considering that our home government embraces four distinct countries that were once four independent kingdoms; that abroad we possess vast colonies peopled, in some cases, by great heterogeneous masses of inhabitants; and that a stream of emigration from these shores has gone on for many years, resulting in the settlement of English-speaking people in all parts of the habitable globe, it would certainly be of advantage, even for practical purposes, that we should have clear and fixed ideas as to what a nation is, and what it is not.

There is an old story to the effect that an Englishman, a

Frenchman, and a German were once entrusted with the task of investigating the nature and habits of the camel, and of embodying the results of their researches in a treatise. The Englishman at once packed up his traps and set off for the deserts of Egypt, where he proposed to study the question on the spot. The Frenchman so far yielded to the practical exigencies of the case as to pay a visit to a menagerie which contained some specimens of the famous oriental quadruped. But the German locked himself up in his study, and produced a learned and weighty dissertation on the subject which he had evolved out of his inner consciousness. I hope no one will imagine that the application of the anecdote lies in the undervaluing of the French and German contributions to our present theme ; but perhaps a native English subject, whose immediate ancestors were Germans, and who belongs to an ancient race distinct from any of the great races that have peopled Europe, may be able in an especial degree to appreciate the perplexing doubts that surround the principle of nationality, and may be in possession of a sort of practical standard by which to test the various statements of that principle.

Let us look at the problem a little more closely. Surveying the various agglomerations of the human species, we find that the social organism assumes many different forms, one of which is the class to be specially investigated. Among the groups to be met with in this survey may be mentioned races, such as the Mongolian or the Malay ; tribes, such as the early Hebrews ; empires, consisting of a number of countries united either by conquest, such as Rome, or by common consent, such as Germany ; confederations, such as Switzerland and America ; communities, existing by reason of a common religion or exclusive customs, but possessing no territory, such as the Parsees and the Gypsies ; clans, such as are met with in Scottish and

early English history; and nations, such as the English and French. It is not of course meant that these groups are mutually exclusive. They may be represented by circles, which in some cases touch, in others intersect, and in certain others coincide with each other. But our task is to differentiate the group nation from all other aggregations of men; to set up a principle, if it is possible to find one, which may apply equally in all cases, and give definiteness and precision to the language we employ in speaking of national attributes and aspirations. It is quite clear that if this principle exists, it must be capable of accommodating itself to the most diverse conditions and the most dissimilar circumstances. The Swiss are a nation no less than the Germans; the Dutch no less than the English. Why are the Scotch a nation, but not the Australians; the Americans, but not the New Zealanders? Again, why do we speak of the Hungarian *nation*, but of the Prussian *people*?

If, in framing our definition of what a nation is, we were to be guided by the language of the current literature of the day—the language employed in political speeches and leading articles—we should find ourselves hopelessly tossed about amid a number of the most various, not to say contradictory, propositions. A considerable list of characteristics might be mentioned, each of which is at various times and in different writings set up as the determining mark of nationality. Thus, it is assumed by one that *territory* is the main consideration, so that a nation would mean a group of individuals comprehended within the same geographical limits. A second conveys the idea that the *state* constitutes the real criterion of nationality, so that a nation would signify a section of the human race the members of which are united to each other, and which is differentiated from other sections, by allegiance to a common political authority, be that authority a sovereign or the acknowledged head of a Republic. A

third implies that nationality is all a matter of *descent* or *race*: a nation is a particular branch of some ethnographical stock or family. A fourth assumes that the extent of a nation is defined by *philology*, or, in other words, that a nation is an aggregate of men speaking the same language. And in like manner it is sometimes superficially asserted that such factors as the religion, the habits and customs, or the physical characteristics of a group of men are sufficient to serve as a sign or badge of the nationality to which they belong.

Now in order to clear up the vagueness which seems to envelope the subject, and so that we may not "float in a sea of doubt, hesitate and flounder," it will be necessary to examine the popular theories just stated, to deal with them in the light of history, and to submit them to the test of the existing condition of things.

1. Let us begin with the statement that a nation is defined by geographical boundaries. I might, perhaps, at once add that by the term geographical in this sense is obviously implied political, not physical geography. It would occur to no one to imagine that the boundaries marked out by nature—by the physical configuration of the earth's surface—are to be taken as outlines limiting the extent of nations. In ancient times, undoubtedly, these natural barriers were the important, often the chief, causes of the separation of one nation from another. In a primitive state of society, seas and mountains effectually divided mankind into distinct groups, and geographical divisions were therefore almost identical with the segregation of nations. With the advance of even the earliest forms of civilization this identity speedily vanished; the natural boundaries on the earth's surface yielded to invention and industry, and ceased to be impediments to the expansion and intermingling of mankind; so that, though even to the present

day, mountains and seas have some effect in the formation of nations, yet there is perhaps no single nation which is entirely marked off by the limits known to physical geography.

But is the case different when we consider political or historical boundaries? According to this view, the decisive mark of a nation's unity would be the frontiers of a country; the lines of demarcation as determined by law or agreed upon by common consent. Now, the chief point lost sight of in this hypothesis is that the frontier of a country is continually liable to be moved. In some parts of the world the boundary lines of two adjacent countries are in a state of continual oscillation. But in the recent history of Europe we have ample demonstration of fluctuations in the political confines of countries. By the last Franco-Prussian war the provinces of Alsace and Lorraine were transferred to the German Empire, and it would follow, if territory were an infallible test of nationality, that the inhabitants of these provinces, after having been Frenchmen since the days of Napoleon, suddenly became Germans in 1870. A still more instructive example is afforded by the conquest and dismemberment of the Kingdom of Poland. Through this vast change in the international politics of Europe, the old political boundaries of the country of Poland have been entirely obliterated, and new limits defining the frontiers of Russia, Prussia, and Austria, substituted in their place. But because the Kingdom of Poland has vanished from the map of Europe, will any one contend that Polish nationality vanished simultaneously? Such a deduction would be sufficiently disposed of by the language in common use in all the countries of Europe, and by the fact that a Pole is an individual as distinct as ever he was, either from a Russian or a German, with whom no one would knowingly confound him.

Another consideration which completely sets aside the test of geography is to be found in the migrations of men from their old settlements, and the colonization of discovered or subjugated territory by members of the same nation. The Australians, that is to say, the settlers from this country or their descendants, not of course the aborigines, are still an integral portion of the English nation. So are the New Zealanders. So are half the Canadians—there is a Canadian people, but no Canadian nation. The same remark applies, indeed, to the English in any of our colonies; thus proving how little geography can control nationality, and despite the peculiar feeling of loyalty to one's country, to what a large extent the historical development of nations sets at defiance the limits of the soil on which they were cradled.

2. We have now to deal with the theory that allegiance to the same political state is an adequate mark of nationality. If this theory be true, then all individuals who belong to a particular state, all who take part in its duties and rights, constitute a nation, while all others must be excluded therefrom.

It must here be remarked for the sake of distinctness, that *state* differs in a material sense from *country*. As far as *country* is concerned, the question of nationality has been already dealt with in considering the geographical divisions of a continent. But a *state* is to some extent, though not by any means invariably, independent of geographical limitations. When we speak of the States of Europe, we mean not the countries, but the various great aggregates of men, united by some kind of common political bond, and acknowledging one central political head or authority. It is evident that a *state* may, and often does, include several *countries*; and further, that those *countries* are not necessarily adjacent, but may even be intersected by *states* other than that to which they belong.

Now it may suit the purposes of a government to enact in its statute-book that all the subjects of a state shall be held to be of the same nationality, but no one will contend that this is anything else than a legal technicalty, answering to no objective reality in the nature or consciousness of mankind. There is, in fact, scarcely a state in Europe whose subjects are all of one nationality, while in some of the states, the dividing-line between one nation and another is broadly and permanently marked. The Austrian Empire is an agglomeration of kingdoms and other political divisions which, in the course of ages, have clustered round the hereditary domains of the House of Hapsburg. The supposition that the various nations included in the empire have become fused, and that out of a number of miscellaneous elements a new Austrian nation has been forged hitherto unknown to history, is at variance with any sound view of the existing situation. Under certain conditions, it is true, such an evolution is not impossible. We have seen it take place in the case of the United States, the people of whom, it is now generally acknowledged, form what is called the American nation. But the merging of several nationalities into one is a very rare event in history; it by no means follows the creation of a new political state. The Hungarians have preserved, and are likely to continue to preserve, their national individuality, despite their inclusion in the Austrian empire. Norway was formerly tributary to Denmark; in 1814, it was added to Sweden. Does any one suppose that the Norwegians were once Danes and that they are now Swedes? It would be useless to multiply instances, but we have only to consider the constitution of our own kingdom to perceive the radical unsoundness of the hypothesis that all the subjects of the same political state belong to one nation.

But in order to complete the argument, and as a further step towards the elucidation of the subject, it may be shown

that the converse proposition is likewise untenable. Not only is it untrue that all the individuals owing allegiance to the same political head are necessarily of one nationality, but it can likewise be demonstrated that sections of the same nation may serve different monarchs and be subject to governments completely independent of each other. A striking example is afforded by the Italian nation. Any one who supposes that the Italian nation came into existence through the formation of the Kingdom of Italy, under Victor Emmanuel, in 1861, and that until then the people now called Italians belonged to the Sicilian, Sardinian, Austrian, and other nations, completely ignores all reason and truth. Perhaps it would be impossible to determine with exactness at what epoch of history the individuality of the Italian nation first stood out as a distinct conception in the mind of Europe. Probably it was one of the new forms of life that slowly emerged from the crumbling ruins of the Roman Empire. But at all events, all through the history of the powerful commonwealths, into which Italy was divided in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; through the period of its subjection to Spain, in the seventeenth; and subsequently through the era immediately preceding the present, when it was split up into numerous petty principalities and kingdoms, it is impossible to deny to the Italian peoples a certain cohesiveness which singles them out as a separate nationality among European nations. The truth, therefore, is, not that the creation of the Kingdom of Italy has called an Italian nationality into being, but, on the contrary, that the consciousness of a common national bond has made the rise of this new political state possible, and opened up the prospect of still further development.

A still more interesting case in point is presented by the Germans. According to the view that nationality and political consolidation are identical, there could hardly be any

talk of the existence of a German nation until King William of Prussia was crowned Emperor of Germany in 1871. The real imperial unity of Germany had vanished centuries before. Ever since the breaking up of the great Western Empire, the political ties which had previously bound the numerous German states by a common allegiance became more and more weakened; and during the greater portion of the interval between the dissolution of the old bonds and the re-constitution of the state by the revival of imperial rule, the constituent states maintained conditions of more or less complete independence towards each other. Even the attempt at a final settlement made in 1815, after Buonaparte's overthrow, resulted in a confederation of a very lax and almost nominal character. Some progress was made towards political unity by the Zollverein; but it was not till the formation of the North German Confederation, in 1866, that the union of Germany began to take material shape by means of a common constitution and representative assembly.

But all this time one never hears of a Prussian nation, a Hanoverian nation, or a Bavarian nation; whereas the conception of a distinct German nation steadily pervades this whole stretch of history, never becoming submerged by its vicissitudes, always standing out clearly from the mists of uncertainty that surround many of its phases. Clearly, then, political independence does not confer a separate nationality; for national feeling often overrides political boundaries, and obliterates mechanical lines of division. The utmost that can be said is that, where this national feeling exists, a tendency towards political consolidation may frequently be traced; but it is likewise true that the tendency may be permanently held in check by the play of other and more weighty forces.

3. The third principle which it is proposed to set up as

a basis for the classification of nations is the principle of race. There is no hypothesis more commonly entertained by superficial writers than that the nationality of a group of men is determined by their common descent. It is admitted, as indeed it must be by even the least observant, that there may be modifying circumstances which somewhat qualify the universality of the law, but it is usually supposed that in the main, and as a general statement, the national bond is formed out of ties of blood.

But however closely such a definition may have been adapted to the conditions of a primitive age, as applied to the composition of modern nations, it is in direct contradiction to the facts of history. Originally, no doubt, a nation was an alliance of consanguineous tribes, and each tribe was simply an extension of the family. But with the successive migrations of Celts, Greeks, Teutons, and Slaves—with the constant pressure of new hordes of invaders upon the populations settled on the land—the old primitive relations were fundamentally changed, and in the gradual and, in a certain sense, arbitrary classification of populations into the various nations such as we now know them, race has played no part whatever—or, at all events, a part so subordinate and insignificant as to afford no guidance in an investigation into the connotation of the term Nationality.

It is strange how the belief in a racial foundation for the division of nations persists, in defiance of the clear statements of history. The theory assumes that if you were to divide men into groups, larger and smaller, in the same manner as animals and plants are classified in the science of natural history, you would arrive at a point in your classification at which the groups so obtained would be co-incident with the nations of the world. Yet is not this assumption manifestly untrue? Animals and plants are grouped into species, and families, and varieties, according to their degrees

of likeness. By these outward marks of similarity, their origin, their descent is decided, and their classification is effected. Suppose the same system of division applied to the human race—the classification would naturally be a genealogical one. It would start from a single family, and widen more and more as it recognised a remoter degree of relationship, and hence took in a larger number of persons able to claim a common descent. It is evident that you could go on widening the circle indefinitely, but no single group that could thus be embraced would be equivalent to a nation, simply because modern nations are the result of an incessant intermingling of these groups, and a constant shuffling and confusion of the elements composing them.

There may, perhaps, be some Oriental nations which consist solely of individuals possessing a common descent—though this is open to very grave doubt—but at all events every European nation is an example of the fact that descent is no conclusive mark of nationality. On the one hand we find that not all having the same descent belong to one nation, and on the other, in every nation we find individuals of different descent. “Ethnographical considerations,” as M. Rénan says, “went for nothing in the constitution of the modern nations. France is Celtic, Iberian, German. Germany is German, Celtic and Slavonian. Italy is the country where ethnography is most embarrassed. Gallic, Etruscan, Pelasgian, Greek, without speaking of many other elements, cross each other in the most inextricable medley. The British Isles in their entirety offer a mixture of Celtic and German blood, of which the proportions are singularly difficult to determine.” As an example of sections of the same race belonging to different nations, I might instance the Flemish, who are of German extraction, but who would by no means consent to form part of the German nation.

But perhaps we are to understand by the race-theory,

not that a whole nation belongs to one race, but that the overwhelming majority does. This is, indeed, what its defenders assert. The fact of the intermingling of races cannot be controverted, but we are often told that the main stream of a nation's history may be traced along the lines of a common descent; that those who form the backbone of a nation's strength, who have created its genius, who have constructed and perfected its political machinery: these are men in whose veins flows the same blood, and who are welded together by sympathies which take their rise from a consciousness of close kinship. Every nation has the characteristics of some particular race broadly stamped upon its life and history, bears the evidence of its racial descent in its thought, customs, and institutions.

In order to test the accuracy of this position, let us take a rapid glance at the proportion in which the various racial elements of the English nation stand towards each other. In the passage just quoted, Rénan talks of the difficulty of determining that proportion in respect of the inhabitants of the British Isles. The British Isles, however, are peopled by three, if not four nations. For the sake of simplifying the subject we will exclude the Scotch, Irish, and Welsh from the problem, and turn our attention only to the English; and we will endeavour to discover what is to be said with respect to the descent of the vast preponderating mass of the English nation.

To the question, Which of the great races of Europe may claim the English as its own? the ordinary manual of English History answers with no uncertain voice. The English are a Teutonic people. Historians of no mean authority teach this doctrine in unhesitating terms; school-boys learn it from their primers, and most people accept it without question. Men like Freeman, Kingsley, and Green are never tired of lauding to the skies the Teutonic qualities

of Englishmen; and when any of Briton's sons distinguish themselves by brilliant achievements, either on the battle-field or in the arts of peace, it is invariably their Teutonic courage, their Teutonic energy, or their Teutonic keenness of intellect that is credited with the triumph. The strongest reasons exist, however, for calling the assertion into question. If we are to place reliance upon the results of those who have patiently and exhaustively studied the ethnology of the people of England on the one hand, and all the evidence in favour of the alleged Teutonism of the English people on the other, we shall be forced to the conclusion that it is quite untrue that Teutonic blood predominates in this country in anything like the degree that is claimed—if, indeed, it predominates at all.

The common story of the subjugation of the ancient Celtic inhabitants of Britain by the Angles and Saxons need not be here repeated in detail. It is asserted that these Teutonic invaders poured into these shores in a series of small expeditions which rapidly succeeded each other; that they gave battle to the native Celts, whom they speedily vanquished; that the latter were thoroughly routed at all points and slaughtered in large quantities; that most of those who survived were driven into the extreme west and south-west of the island, into Cumberland, Wales, and Cornwall; and that an insignificant few, who remained behind, became the slaves of the new-comers, who took possession of the country and permanently occupied it. It is these Anglo-Saxon invaders, it is maintained, that form the true progenitors of the English nation. A large and important admixture of foreign blood was undoubtedly effected soon afterwards through the incursions of the Scandinavians, who settled in considerable numbers in the north-east portions of the island; but as these Northmen were likewise Teutonic in race, the fact of their coming only adds to the strength of

the popular theory regarding the descent of the English people.

It will be seen that the truth of this theory rests entirely on the probability of the received account of the extermination of the ancient Britons by the Anglo-Saxons, and the gradual colonization, by the latter, of the whole of the country. But the more that account is subjected to the keen analysis of the impartial critic, the less likely does it appear to have been a true record of what actually took place. Broadly speaking, there are two sources for the belief that the Britons were completely dispossessed of their territories, and that, practically speaking, they may be neglected, in tracing the history of the English nation. Those sources are: first, the traditions handed down by the old historians; secondly, the evidence constantly afforded by the English language.

With regard to the first of these data, it is acknowledged that all the old accounts of the Anglo-Saxon invasion of Britain are either copies or amplifications of one original statement. That statement is furnished by a monk named Gildas, who wrote in Wales about the year 560, and who gives what professes to be a circumstantial description of the landing of the Teutonic invaders, and their successive conquests. Now, it has been shewn by Mr. Pike, in his book, *The English, and their Origin*, as well as by other writers, that the testimony of Gildas is, unless supported by corroborative evidence, almost worthless. His statements on other points are utterly untrustworthy; his work is meagre in fact, copious in words, and stuffed with sounding epithets, and, moreover, he did not write with the object of giving us the historical facts of the conquest. The conclusion therefore is, that the testimony of tradition is quite insufficient in itself to support the commonly accepted notion of the extermination of the Britons; and the question arises, Is

there any confirmatory evidence? The reply usually given is, Yes, the required additional support is forthcoming; it is to be found in the testimony of language. The basis of the English language is undoubtedly Anglo-Saxon; the language spoken to-day in England is a historical development of the tongue spoken by the Teutonic invaders of Britain; and it is this fact that has hitherto been relied upon as confirming the voice of tradition, and as forming the salient justification of the theory that the English are in the main a Teutonic people.

But the principle—once regarded as a fundamental law in the science of ethnology—that language is a criterion of race, has been completely surrendered by the later ethnologists. It has been shewn that instances are not rare of a whole people giving up their original tongue and adopting a foreign language. Professor Huxley* quotes the example of the Feegeans, whose physical peculiarities prove their intimate relationship with their neighbours the Negritos of New Caledonia, but who, nevertheless, speak a Polynesian language. Coming nearer home, we see in France how the ancient languages once spoken by the Belgae, Celtae, and Aquitani of Cæsar's time, have almost entirely disappeared. One set of invaders from the north compelled those peoples to adopt a Teutonic name, while another set from the south-east gradually imposed on them a new language. Yet how false to history and fact would be the inference that, because the French people speak a Latin language, "this population was essentially and fundamentally a 'Latin' race which had some communication with the Celts." "Community of language," says Huxley, "testifies to close contact between the people who speak the language, but to nothing else; philology has absolutely nothing to do with ethnology,

* "Methods and Results of Ethnology," in his *Critiques and Addresses*, p. 141.

except in so far as it suggests the existence or absence of such contact. The contrary assumption, that language is the test of race, has introduced the utmost confusion into ethnological speculation, and has nowhere worked greater scientific and practical mischief than in the ethnology of the British Islands." In the same essay, he says that the fact of the Teutonic English being now spoken throughout Britain "affords not the slightest justification for the common practice of speaking of the present inhabitants of Britain as an 'Anglo-Saxon' people."

There is no valid evidence in favour of the common story of the slaughter and expulsion of the Britons; it is preposterous on the face of it; there is no instance of such a wholesale suppression of a people in the whole range of history, except where the conquerors are so vastly superior in civilization and resource to the conquered as, for instance, the English to the aborigines of Australia; and it is far easier to suppose that the Saxons forced the conquered to adopt their language, than to suppose that they succeeded in butchering or driving forth a people, of whom all the accounts tell us that they were courageous and brave. And this view of the survival of the Britons, and their intermingling with the Saxon conquerors, which is *prima facie* the more reasonable one, obtains the strongest confirmation from a comparison between the physical attributes of modern Englishmen and those of the various ancient peoples who are known to have taken up their residence in these islands at different times: the Britons, the Saxons, the Scandinavians, and afterwards the Norman-French. The purely zoological method of inquiry is the only safe guide in ethnology; the measurements of the skull, the colour of the hair and iris, the general physical build, are the only sure external indications of descent; and we are indebted to Dr. Beddoe for having published in his work, *The Races of Britain*, a perfectly

astounding mass of facts on these important points, which constitute the only solid foundation on which a theory of the descent of Englishmen can be based. This author is opposed to the conclusions of some previous writers who maintained that the total addition to the inhabitants of the country through the Anglo-Saxon conquest only reached an insignificant proportion of the whole population, and that, therefore, Celtic and not Anglo-Saxon blood vastly predominates in the English nation; but the results of his exhaustive enquiry are no less opposed to the accepted belief in the preponderating Teutonism of the English. His general conclusion is, that in some parts of the east and north, Anglo-Saxon or Scandanavian blood predominates, and that in the greater part of England it amounts to something like half.

I have indulged in a somewhat lengthy digression, but it was necessary in order to settle the point at issue, and it has served its purpose. It has been shown that the test of race, as a determining mark of nationality, however widely or however narrowly it be applied, absolutely fails. Who is the typical modern Englishman? Is he a Celt or a Teuton? Is he a Briton, a Saxon, a Norseman, a Dane, or a Norman? He is the result of a mixture of all. There is hardly an Englishman living who can trace his descent (both paternal and maternal) ten generations back; and if he could construct a genealogical chart, would he not be hopelessly at a loss to vouch for the racial affinity of the hundreds of forefathers appearing in it whose blood flows in his veins? The same considerations apply with more or less exactness to most of the European nations, and in a superlative degree to the American nation; the races have become inextricably mixed, and the influence of race distinctions upon the formation and segregation of nations has been strangely exaggerated. The Germans are called a Teutonic

people, but probably they are one-third Slavonic. In what family the French are to be included it is impossible to say, so confused and jumbled are the many elements out of which the nation has been evolved.

We must, then, dismiss the idea that we can expect to find a key to the meaning of nationality from a study of the races of mankind. Ethnology, strictly speaking, hardly takes us further than the point where the movements out of which the modern nations slowly emerged, began. As a department of anthropology, it is a science of infinite value and interest; but it furnishes no results which supply a basis for the classification of nations and for framing a theory of nationality.

4. It remains to inquire whether we may discover such a basis in the element of language. Language, as we have seen, is no test of race; but it does not follow from this that language cannot be the distinguishing mark of nationality, because, as we have also learned, race and nationality represent ideas quite independent of each other. Yet a moment's consideration will show that language, too, fails to satisfy the conditions of the problem. For if it were the required standard, we should have all the individuals of a nation speaking the same language, and no language spoken by more than one nation. Yet neither of these propositions is true. The Swiss speak three or four different languages, and they are one of the most compact and united of nations. Among the Belgians, both French and Flemish are widely spoken. The Scotch include a vast number of people who cannot speak a word of Gaelic, and perhaps not a few who speak Gaelic only, yet both classes would repudiate the insinuation that they do not belong to the Scotch nation. On the other hand, the people of the United States and the English use the same tongue, but form separate nations; and similarly the Spanish speaking populations of South

America are of a different nationality from the people of Spain. The same remark applies in the case of language as was made with respect to political combination. There are no doubt cases where the employment of a common language indicates that the speakers are united by the national bond; but this is very far from being universally the case. And the most that can be said is that a tendency exists among the individuals of a nation to adopt the same speech as a method of closer communication; but conditions frequently subsist, which counteract that inclination and prevent its practical operation.

The results which have been arrived at by the foregoing inquiry are purely negative. We have succeeded in demonstrating what nationality is not; but little progress, it may be thought, has been made towards establishing any positive definition. But in reality an examination of the hypotheses floating on the surface of current literature, and taken for granted in the common thought of the day, was absolutely necessary for a thorough investigation of the problem. It will soon be evident that a principle is yielded by a discussion of these assumptions, which leads naturally to the framing of an answer to the question, conformable alike with reason and fact.

It is plain that, before the dawn of history, when mankind were still in a primitive state, any one of the criteria which have been discussed, might have stood as a valid test of nationality. It is doubtful, perhaps, whether the term "nation," in any conceivable sense, can rightly be applied to any section of the human race, as the race existed under the conditions of the remote past. But assuming that it can, the nationality of such a group might be expressed indifferently in terms of geography (both physical and political), ethnology or philology. A nation, if it was anything, was an

aggregation of individuals, occupying the same territory, acknowledging the same head, sprung from the same race, speaking the same language. We might add several other distinguishing marks of which the same might be said, yet equally inapplicable to the altered conditions of modern times ; such as religion, manners and customs, political institutions. Before man had discovered his power to master and set at defiance the forces and barriers of physical nature, any one of these tests would have sufficed. But so soon as we cross the threshold of history, we perceive all these conditions changing and giving way to others. History is largely the record of these revolutions. And here we touch the core of the problem. For what is history? It is the expression of the will of man. The will of man—that inner force of the human mind, which so often works in opposition to the restraints and limitations of physical nature ; this it is that has made history, and that has called the modern nations into existence. Geography, ethnology, and even for the most part philology, are sciences which investigate conditions as they are, rather than those which have been brought about by the conscious, purposive action of the race. They all deal with physical characteristics. But there is something higher, more powerful than them all ; it is the will of man.

We hence perceive the fallacy underlying any attempt to define nationality by physical marks or attributes. Our problem is not a physical one, it is a psychological one ; we have to deal not with objective marks of likeness, but with subjective ones. The tie that holds the members of a nation together is a subtle, invisible, spiritual bond, woven out of the innumerable threads of individual feelings and desires, which will not always be dictated to by physical differences. The true nature and essence of nationality can only be understood when viewed from this standpoint. “ Into the

natural distribution of the human species," * says Professor Lazarus, one of the foremost philosophers of Germany, "according to races, larger and smaller groups, stocks, federations of families, and families, there enters the human spirit, freedom, history. By this interference, things naturally combined are separated; things naturally separate are mixed, or are assimilated to each other. Spiritual affinity and diversity is therefore independent of genealogical. It is on this encroachment of the spiritual (*geistig*), historical relations upon the differences marked out by nature, that the conception of nation is founded; and that which makes a nation what it is, lies essentially not so much in certain objective conditions, such as descent, language, etc., regarded as such, but in reality only in the subjective opinion of the members of the nation, who all agree with each other to regard themselves as a nation. The idea of a nation rests upon the subjective opinion of the members of the nation themselves about themselves, about their likeness and cohesion. If animals and plants are to be dealt with, it is the natural historian who decides what species they belong to, according to their objective characteristics; in the case of man, however, we ask him to what nation he belongs. Race and descent can also, in the case of man, be decided objectively; but a man fixes upon his own nation, from subjective considerations."

Broadly speaking, then, we come to this conclusion: that the nationality of a man depends upon his own will; he belongs to the nation which he instinctively or deliberately recognizes as his. A nation is a group of individuals who are alike suffused by what can only be described as a kind of corporate soul—that inspiring influence which we call national feeling. Paradoxical as it may sound, it is still not a mere empty truism to say that a nation is a section of

* *Was heisst National?* Berlin, 1880. p. 12.

mankind, pervaded by a common national feeling ; for it is this national feeling which calls the nation into being, not the nation which creates national feeling. This impalpable, immaterial influence is the only mark which will serve as a universal criterion for the classification of nations. Directly we introduce a physical attribute, it is speedily discovered that there are exceptional cases to which it does not apply. And the reason for this is obvious. The human species is differently affected and influenced in different circumstances. Though marching triumphantly over the obstacles of physical nature, the human will is never entirely uninfluenced by external conditions. The latter always enter to some extent into every problem which the volition of man sets itself to solve ; but according as these external conditions vary, the decisions of men may not impossibly differ. National feeling, therefore, is not always the resultant of the same complication of forces, or at all events, not of the same forces acting in the same proportion of strength. Gustav Rümelin, Chancellor of the University of Tübingen, who, in an address delivered in 1872, arrives at the same conclusion regarding the concept nation as is here set forth, remarks with truth :—"The origin of most of the nations lies in a dark foretime which is beyond the reach of our research ; but even where it can be illumined with historic testimony, we are only told how these definite conditions sprang into existence ; the foundation on which the formation of nations rests is taken for granted. This can only lie in the natural characteristics and endowments of the human species, and must be shown not by the historian, but by the psychologist."

We can hence understand how it comes to pass that in different nations, the common corporate will, which always forms the basis of its nationality, may, nevertheless, express itself in different forms ; and yet why no single such expres-

sion will serve as a distinguishing mark for all other cases as well as its own. In one instance, national feeling may take the form of love for political autonomy; in another, it may express itself in loyalty to historic territory; and in a third, it may be identical with the devotion to one particular language. Richard Böeckh contributed to the *Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft* of 1866, a learned and searching essay entitled, "The Statistical Importance of the Popular Tongue as a Mark of Nationality," in which he contends that the genius of a nation—its thought, its activity, its culture—finds universal expression in its language. He hence concludes that it is language that constitutes the characteristic sign of nationality. But Böeckh fixed his attention chiefly on the national feeling of the Germans. It may be true in the special case of that people, or may have been twenty years ago, that language forms the ideal standard round which all sections of the nation rally, and which they therefore regard as the crucial test for deciding who are and who are not Germans. But as a basis for defining national feeling in general, the test, as we have seen, signally fails. It is contradicted by the Swiss, who, in spite of their linguistic differences, maintain their national feeling at a high level; it is contradicted by the Americans, who have not been prevented by their community of language with the English from developing a separate national feeling of their own.

Rénan,* in his solution of the problem of nationality, comes to a conclusion in substantial, though not complete, agreement with the view I have endeavoured to set forth. He says: "A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things, which to say truth only make one, constitute this soul, this spiritual principle. One is in the past, the other in the present. The one is the possession of a rich legacy of

* *Qu'est ce qu'une Nation*, p. 26.

memories; the other is actual agreement in the present, the desire to live together, the wish to continue to make that heritage valuable which one has received undivided. . . . To have common glories in the past, a common will in the present; to have accomplished great things together, to wish to do so again: here is the essential condition for being a people." True as this view is on the whole, it errs through not taking into account the many inducements that sometimes weigh with individuals, and more rarely, but not impossibly, with a whole people, to gradually adopt a new nationality. Rümelin goes to the root of the matter when he says, "Human freedom stands above all these single powers of attraction; it is possible for me to tear myself away from everything, and to go to strangers and say, with King David's ancestress, 'thy people shall be my people, and thy God shall be my God.' The conception of nation is not strictly circumscribed by objective marks, it demands also subjective perception. My nation is that which I regard as mine, the people whom I call my own, with whom I feel myself bound by indissoluble bonds. And here a division, a schism of feelings, is possible; one motive may draw me to this circle, another to that; faith may direct me to one group, from which the tie of community, of state, or of descent severs me. But our soul always feels and deplores every such division and brokenness of inclination as a trouble; it will always be accompanied by a silent longing for a full, united community of life. There will always be hovering before it that central group which embraces all the aims of life; the group in which all the single motives that lead to human grouping find their point of contact; the group of which we have the full consciousness: these are our own, among whose adherents we stand, towards whom we are constant, whose fate we share, from whom to separate were an unbearable thought."

Finally, a word must be said as regards the application of the principles here maintained to individual instances. It follows, from the considerations set forth, that only in a very few cases can there be any doubt as to whether a given group is entitled to be regarded as possessing a distinct nationality. Where an individual national consciousness finds clear and general expression, where the determination to be a nation is vigorous and powerful, all that is absolutely indispensable to constitute a nation is present, be the grounds of the determination what they may. There can thus only arise a doubt with respect to a group among whom that consciousness is vague or flickering—where the will is feeble and intermittent. Such an uncertainty betokens either of two things. Either it is a sign that a new nation is about to spring into existence, that new germs of life are slowly developing, and are about to cast themselves adrift from the old life in the midst of which they had their origin; or it is the premonitory symptom of the disappearance of a nation, the sign that the people composing it have lost the *raison d'être* of their national individuality, and are content to merge themselves in some larger group with which they have formed profound sympathies.

We thus see that the national cohesion and independence of a group of people are conditions which rest upon their own common consciousness, and that, in the case of an individual attaching himself to a nation, his nationality is determined by his own consciousness, which must in the end be identical with the consciousness of the nation. And the fact that this consciousness, this national feeling may, in different nations, manifest itself in different ways, suggests the belief that the nations of the world are, as it were, counterparts of each other; that each is, in a psychological as well as in a physical sense, the complement of the rest, in the great kingdom of the human race. The fact of

national unity brings into prominence the social yearnings of men; the forces of combination by which they are governed. But it likewise accentuates the differences by which men are necessarily separated; the lines of demarcation which inevitably keep them apart. If it be asked whether national feeling is a noble or ignoble sentiment, it can only be replied that a larger view of the mutual relations of nationalities discloses the truth that these unavoidable separations may subserve a high and noble purpose. Economists tell us that division of labour is an essential condition of our developed life; a necessity of modern civilisation. The individual working for his own hand finds that all the time he has also been working for others, contributing some portion to the common task, without which that task would be incomplete. The same law pervades the varied energies and aims of nations. Each nation, if it seeks to fulfil its true destiny, labours at some portion of the gigantic machine by which the work of humanity is carried on. "By their diverse faculties, often opposed, the nations perform the common work of civilization; all bring forth a note to this grand concert of humanity which, in effect, is the highest ideal reality which we can attain." I say, "if each seek to fulfil its true destiny." The story is told of a mountaineer, that once climbing an Alpine mountain on a misty day, he beheld what seemed to be a monster looming ahead of him in the distance. Nothing daunted, he persevered in his ascent, and as he drew nearer perceived that what he had mistaken for an apparition was the figure of a man. At last coming quite close to the spot, he found that the object of his gaze was his own brother.

We may hope that a like experience may mark the advance of the nations along the path of civilization. The time has hardly yet come to an end when each nation,

peering vainly through the thick mists of bigotry and distrust, regarded the people of the surrounding nations as monsters, whom it was its business to attack, to crush, to deprive of power and vitality. Slowly the more enlightened nations are beginning to realize that the ends of humanity may be served by a better method than by the brutal inhuman system of warfare and bloodshed; they have advanced nearer to their neighbours, and find that the latter are, like themselves, men, with the same faculties, the same aspirations, the same obligations. But at the risk of being deemed visionaries, let us indulge in the dream that some day, though it be in the dim and distant future, the distance between nation and nation may be still more shortened, the dividing lines be still more effectually obliterated; and that the time may come when the men of all nations will discover that they are brothers—brothers by reason of the sacred kinship of their common humanity, brothers in right of their common membership of the great "Parliament of man, the Federation of the world."

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